

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3442

To amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance the rehabilitative services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans with mental illnesses and other veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 5, 2003

Mrs. NAPOLITANO (for herself and Mr. MURPHY) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance the rehabilitative services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans with mental illnesses and other veterans, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Mental
5 Health and Back-to-Work Act of 2003”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The statutory advisory committee of the
2 Department of Veterans Affairs known as the Com-
3 mittee on Care of Veterans with Serious Mental Ill-
4 ness has underscored the need to integrate psycho-
5 social recovery in the treatment of mental illness.

6 (2) In its report to the President dated July 22,
7 2003, the President’s New Freedom Commision on
8 Mental Health (established by Executive order No.
9 13263 of April 29, 2002), identified the hope of re-
10 covery as the single most important goal of mental
11 health service delivery.

12 (3) The Surgeon General, in a report on mental
13 health issued in 1999, stated that “state of the art
14 care for severe mental illness is recovery oriented
15 care which requires an array of services that include
16 intensive case management, access to substance
17 abuse treatment, peer support and psychosocial re-
18 habilitation such as pharmacologic treatment, hous-
19 ing, employment services, independent living and so-
20 cial skills training.”.

21 (4) During fiscal year 2002, the Department of
22 Veterans Affairs treated 757,767 patients in spe-
23 cialty mental health settings, of whom 293,246 were
24 seriously mentally ill.

1 (5) Approximately 21 percent of all patients
2 seen by the Department of Veterans Affairs are seen
3 for mental health treatment.

4 (6) When veterans with mental illness do not
5 receive comprehensive rehabilitative care, they are
6 more likely to become homeless and, according to
7 the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, 45
8 percent of homeless veterans suffer from at least one
9 mental illness and need help finding a job.

10 (7) A study of the program operations of the
11 Department of Veterans Affairs during fiscal year
12 2000 found that fewer than one percent of the
13 82,000 veterans under the age of 55 who have schiz-
14 ophrenia participated in compensated work therapy
15 programs.

16 (8) The National Mental Health Information
17 Center of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health
18 Services Administration of the Department of
19 Health and Human Services found a shocking 90
20 percent unemployment rate among adults with seri-
21 ous mental illness, the worst level of unemployment
22 of any group of people with disabilities.

23 (9) A study by the National Mental Health In-
24 formation Center found that serious mental illness
25 need not lead to unemployment when seriously men-

1 tally ill individuals are given proper training and em-
 2 ployment support services.

3 **SEC. 3. ENHANCEMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES FOR**
 4 **VETERANS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND**
 5 **OTHER VETERANS.**

6 (a) REHABILITATIVE SERVICES THROUGH MEDICAL
 7 CARE AUTHORITY.—Section 1701(8) is amended by strik-
 8 ing “(other than those types of vocational rehabilitation
 9 services provided under chapter 31 of this title)”.

10 (b) EXPANSION OF AUTHORIZED REHABILITATIVE
 11 SERVICES.—Section 1718 is amended—

12 (1) in subsection (c)(1)—

13 (A) by striking “subsection (b) of this sec-
 14 tion” and inserting “subsection (b) or (d)”; and

15 (B) by striking “paragraph (2) of such
 16 subsection” and inserting “subsection (b)(2)”;

17 (2) by redesignating subsections (d), (e), and
 18 (f) as subsections (e), (f), and (g), respectively; and

19 (3) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-
 20 lowing new subsection (d):

21 “(d) In providing to a veteran rehabilitative services
 22 under this chapter, the Secretary may furnish the veteran
 23 with the following:

24 “(1) Work skills training and development serv-
 25 ices.

1 “(2) Employment support services.

2 “(3) Job development and placement services.”.

3 **SEC. 4. COMMITTEE ON CARE OF VETERANS WITH SERIOUS**
4 **MENTAL ILLNESS.**

5 (a) NAME OF COMMITTEE.—The committee of the
6 Department of Veterans Affairs established under section
7 7321 of title 38, United States Code, shall be known and
8 designated as the “Committee on Care of Veterans with
9 Serious Mental Illness”.

10 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED IN ANNUAL RE-
11 PORT.—Section 7321 of title 38, United States Code, is
12 amended by adding at the end the following new sub-
13 section:

14 “(e) The committee shall include in its annual report
15 to the Secretary its assessment of how the programs of
16 the Department under section 1718 of this title are serv-
17 ing veterans with mental illness. The committee shall in-
18 clude such recommendations for improving services to vet-
19 erans with mental illness under such programs as the com-
20 mittee considers appropriate.”.

21 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Subsection (a)
22 of such section is amended by striking “Committee on
23 Care of Severely Chronically Mentally Ill Veterans” and
24 inserting “Committee on Care of Veterans with Serious
25 Mental Illness”.

1 (2) The heading of such section is amended to read
2 as follows:

3 **“§ 7321. Committee on Care of Veterans with Serious**
4 **Mental Illness”.**

5 (3) The item relating to such section in the table of
6 sections at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is
7 amended to read as follows:

“7321. Committee on Care of Veterans with Serious Mental Illness.”.

